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ABSTRACT

This is an analysis of the distinguishing features of 20 or so alternative teacher preparation programs at the University of Massachusetts, School of Education. The rationale for their existence is also presented. Programs are categorized in three ways: a) by ends and rationales, b) by motifs, and c) by programmatic components. Specific programs among the 20 illustrate the usefulness of the categories. A brief description of each alternative program is appended. (Author)

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ALTERNATIVES IN TEACHER PREPARATION:
A Case Study

by

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ALTERNATIVES IN TEACHER PREPARATION: A Case Study

It may be helpful in understanding the confusing complexity of our "alternatives" approach to teacher education, to refer to how these 20 or more programs came into being (see end of article for brief program descriptions). During the early stages of examination of our more traditional stance, a small group of faculty and students was appointed to serve as a helping and long-range policy board, called the Teacher Preparation Program Council (TPPC). This group made the basic recommendation for an alternatives approach. To encourage all segments of the School of Education to seriously consider becoming involved in teacher preparation, TPPC invited staff (faculty and graduate students) to articulate their ideals of teacher preparation programs. Three abstract guidelines were established, required for all proposals: (1) there must be a rationale; (2) there must be an experiential component; (3) there must be a reflective effort. Practical concerns, such as meeting State certification requirements, finding experiential sites, getting staff help, coping with administrative hassles, etc. were not constraints in this initial invitation for "dream" programs. The point is that when prior assumptions about teacher preparation were set aside, and fresh ones were explored, the resulting programs that were invented require differing ways of looking at programs in the effort to describe and understand their purposes, their themes and their components.

Many of those visiting at the University of Massachusetts School of Education eventually find their way to TPPC members to ask "what do you do in elementary education?" or "what is your secondary education department like?" The response is usually to bumble for several minutes trying to find out what the visitor really wants to know, but the major dilemma cannot be

avoided. The School of Education has no department of either elementary or secondary education. This article is an attempt to describe some of the hows and whys of the 20 programs, using several different categories which both observers and participants have found useful.

Any explanation of these programs must begin with an understanding of the assumptions which form the rationale for creating alternatives within the School of Education. The School as an institution is committed to the notion of diversity and alternatives in education based on the premise that different people learn different things differently, and on the premise that experts do not agree on what should be learned.

The commitment within the School to alternatives led directly to these assumptions about schooling: that different kinds of pupils may need different kinds of teachers; that different kinds of schools need different kinds of teachers and that different subcultures and cultures may need different kinds of schools -- all assumptions that have direct bearing on teacher preparation.

A commitment to alternatives was not only an abstract rationale for the creation of alternative programs. Conventional wisdom, the pooling of individuals' common experiences, told us that our faculty, graduate students, and recent college graduates were not satisfied with their preparation as teachers. People who were already teachers were often disenchanted with teacher preparation as it was being "done to them" in 1970. University undergraduates had begun to realize that the School's commitment to diversity and alternatives at the graduate levels was not adequately reflected in its teacher preparation programs, for there were only token alternatives in teacher preparation, an area which enrolled 90% of the School's undergraduates. Isolated experiments in individual courses and one alternative program gave

impetus to the rising feeling that not only must there be something better but that there was something better.

A single "something better" proved impossible to find. There is a wide range of opinions within the School as to the whys and whats of designs for teacher preparation programs. Nor are there definitive leads for decisions about teacher education deducible from the research on teacher competency and on teacher education. In sum, there is little consensus among experts (be they school teachers, administrators, college professors, school boards, theorists, researchers, etc.) as to the best ways of preparing teachers.

The next questions were which and how many alternatives. The lack of agreement among the experts (practitioners and theorists) in teacher education gave little direction except to say that the School was not committed to a certain alternative, one certain something. However, the advantage of lack of agreement as to answers was that everyone would have the chance to create what they thought might be an answer. And over two years, there appeared at least 20 sets of people, designers, who had an alternative that they wanted to offer to students preparing to be teachers. Thus, disagreement among the experts reinforced the School's commitment to a series of alternatives in teacher preparation.

Describing and distinguishing among 20 alternative programs for visitors interested in revising their own college programs, for faculty curious about the changes they were part of, and for University students faced with making choices among programs quickly became a formidable task. The difficulties increased in direct relationship to the increase in the number of programs. Through many months of sifting through very general to very specific questions, we gradually evolved several different reference points -- overlapping categories for describing programs. For this plethora

we have not found any single set of categorical descriptions to be adequate in answering all persons or all questions. We therefore carry three sets of answers in the bag and pull them out in many variations. This article presents the categories -- you create your own variations.

One set of categories is highly abstract, having to do with means-ends issues, with rationales, with broad theories. Another lens focuses on less abstract concerns, what we call the motif of the program. The third analysis is programmatic, with rather specific references to the nuts and bolts, the components, of the alternatives.

ENDS AND RATIONALES

The ends of all programs are similar, in the very general sense that each program in our broad definition of the teaching role is helping people to learn to influence other people intentionally. Three primary distinctions within this same vague end are those programs which are most interested in influencing the social order, those most concerned in influencing individuals, and those focused on acquisition of the cultural heritage. Some programs claim a mutual, interacting emphasis on two or all three ends. Several programs differ most on their hierarchy of more specific ends.

The long history of attempts to find relationships between the designs of teacher preparation programs and the purposes of school, through research in teacher education and through construction of unified theories, has left us in a state of mixed, sometimes conflicting, findings and conclusions about which means will best lead to selected ends. The 20 programs therefore differ most widely as to specific means, which is later discussed as the third way of categorizing.

The rationales behind program means and ends are in some cases the most

difficult part to get at and to understand. There are instances where an elaborate rationale for a program design may be ambiguous in relation to the program which actually emerged. In other cases, the means hang together in such an integrated structure that a clear rationale for the implementation of that design is implied even though it may never have been carefully articulated as such. For other programs the rationale has been that the past has not worked and "I want to try means A, B, and C and then maybe there will be a future rationale growing out of what I find." Alternative teacher preparation programs at the School exist all along the continuum from articulated to unarticulated rationales, and along the continuum of degrees of implementation.

Programs deal with diverse rationales and theories to explain program objectives, roles of teachers, methods of teaching, curriculum decisions, selection of students, evaluation of students, etc. Often the rationale for a goal emphasis (such as influencing individuals) tends to have a logical consistency with selected theories as to teacher roles (such as the counselor or facilitator models), and selected theories as to methods (such as non-directive and awareness training), and selected theories as to desired learning outcomes (such as strong self concept).

Several of the programs have been the focus for doctoral dissertations; out of this has frequently come the more extensive, thorough rationales or explanations of purposes, and of connections between means and ends. Examples of some of the more complete rationales are: Alternative Learning Environments-Secondary (ALE-S); The Alternative Schools Program (TASP); Amherst Elementary; Explorations!; Integrated Day (METEP); Teacher Education Program at Mark's Meadow (TEPAM); Urban Education. Other programs are in the process of more fully articulating their underlying principles.

MOTIFS

Four different primary motifs among programs are those that are directed toward particular learners, particular schools, particular teaching styles, or a particular curriculum or content area. In the Bilingual-Bicultural Program, the 11+ Program, Omnibus, Fitchburg Exchange, and Media Specialists for the Deaf, undergraduates have as a focus learning to teach particular children rather than primarily focusing on a particular curriculum in a particular method. In some instances this also includes particular schools.

Urban schools, alternative schools, integrated day and cooperative education are each the focus of programs preparing teachers for those types of schools.

Specific learning and teaching modes such as the 'integrated day' provide the base for programs where students learn in modes that the faculty hopes these students will later adapt as teachers. Explorations! necessitates the individual student's decision making, while the Mark's Meadow Program is highly individualized within a framework of a 5-semester, carefully defined structure.

In several programs students spend a major portion of their time in learning experiences oriented toward a particular content area such as Agriculture, English, Math, Social Studies, Science, or Reading.

The student who has specific ideas about what he wants, and those visitors with specific goals in mind often find this kind of categorization by motif helpful in threading their way between the many programs with similar means and different educational goals or with similar goals and different means. Our pigeon holing of programs into these slots is probably an injustice to their realities; we do find that this way of

viewing programs gives visitors and students some sort of handle for further, more accurate understanding of programs.

PROGRAMMATIC COMPONENTS: FOUNDATIONS, CURRICULUM AND METHODS, CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

The previous categories (ends-rationales; motifs) are useful in making broad distinctions among the 20 programs. However, most visitors want a closer connection to what they already know, to their previous experiences, to what's happening in programs at their institutions. People who are hiring and certifying our graduates also sometimes ask "What did you do in foundations? Have you any work in methods? Where did you do your student teaching?" With these important questions/components in mind, we can explain some of our common and not so common ways of approaching these areas which are seen by many as important features of any teacher preparation program by any name.

Foundations

There are learning experiences at the School entitled "Foundations of Education" which are required by some programs. Some of these courses have been modularized by faculty for students in a certain program with particular goals or approaches or theories in mind. Others fit the more traditional definition of a foundations course as an introduction to the historical, philosophical, and sociological foundations of education.

For several years before the creation of alternative teacher preparation programs, the Foundations staff had been creating alternative learning experiences which would fulfill the 'foundations' requirement. These vary from Philosophy of Education, to Introduction to International Education, to The Civil Rights of Teachers, to Sexism in American Education, etc.

Some programs have created their internal foundations component which may or may not be open to other members of the University. For example, 'Introduction to Urban Education' is the required foundations component of the Center for Urban Education's Teacher Preparation Program (CUETEP) and is also a learning experience open to anyone in the University. The Off-Campus Program which sends students all over the world offers several cross cultural learning experiences related specifically to the cultural bases of education in the country which they have chosen for their practicum experience. Horizons and International Education are other examples with specially designed foundations experiences.

There are several programs which have no specific component or learning experience labeled 'foundations', but which integrate varied themes and principles of foundations throughout the total program. For example, the year-long Education and Community Service Program (ECS) takes place on site in a community where students fulfill educative roles in institutions or settings other than schools, and where these experiences are seen within the context of foundation themes. Explorations! has a series of workshops or weekend meetings which serve a similar function.

Methods and Curriculum

Semester-long learning experiences titled "Methods of Teaching Math in Secondary Schools" or "Methods of Teaching Reading" still exist. However, as programs have developed their individual educational philosophy, goals, and methods, these once-large courses which attempted to serve everyone have been revised and individualized to fit the differing needs of members of different programs.

One major revision which has affected and been affected by a number

of programs is the Elementary Methods Potpourri, a highly flexible administrative structure which connects student/program needs and desires with available resources in the School, the University, and personnel in schools from the wider community. Each offering of the Potpourri runs for about 15 meetings and is assigned 100 mods or 1 hour of credit. During one semester, a student may have as many as 25 different offerings in methods from which to choose one to three for 1-3 hours of credit. Potpourri offerings in the last year have included: "Helping Children with Expressive Writing;" "Creating and Investigating Science and Math Methods;" "'Primitive' World Music for Classroom Teachers;" "Behavior Modification in the Classroom;" "Understanding Achievement and I.Q. Tests;" "Future-Oriented Teaching Methods;" etc.

A number of programs have opted to continue the traditional practice of students participating in learning experiences in methods and curriculum before they begin a clinical experience. Others, such as the Off-Campus Program, have felt that a students' method experience should largely occur after they have spent time in the classroom, have clear ideas about what they need to learn, and have some experience to provide a grounding for theory.

Another alternative has been for programs to carry on instruction in methods concurrently with a clinical experience, where the student has a testing area for theory readily available and a helpful place to bring his questions like "Nothing seems to work -- what do I do now?" CUETEP has flown teams of methods experts to cities where student teachers were working to run a series of weekend methods workshops. Cooperating school teachers in several programs provide on the job training in methods for student teachers in conjunction with University staff.

In programs such as Cooperative Education, International Education, Future Studies, and Horizons, students and staff have either not been pleased with or not found enough already developed school curriculum for themselves. Therefore, students in these programs are learning about curriculum and methods by building a structure for their own learning and for their later adaptation in classrooms with pupils.

Clinical Experience

Each of the alternative programs must include a clinical experience. However, there are no specifics as to length, place, numbers, age or sorts of learners. A clinical experience may--and has been--in a prison or juvenile detention home, a public or private alternative school, a series of Headstart Programs, or a children's museum.

Clinical experiences may vary in length from one month to a full year. An ECS student is on site for a full year working in the community. In Explorations! the clinical experience is individually designed by each student in conjunction with the program directors. Other programs such as Amherst Elementary and Mark's Meadow have two or more, semester-long, clinical experiences.

Just as experiences in methods and curriculum come in different sequences, so do clinical experiences. There has been a gradual shift among programs toward a variety of pre-practicum, practicum, post-practicum sequences. Although most programs require approximately the same number of hours, those hours may be distributed from two semesters of work to five semesters.

Some programs have direct connection with a specific school or school system where technical experience is based. The Integrated Day Program and its four site towns are all participants in the Staff Development Cooperative

(SDC) in which the teacher helps the intern implement some of the techniques that they have both learned at SDC workshops at the University. This is a good example of a preservice-inservice pattern. The Amherst Elementary Program is codirected by a faculty member from the University and a principal of one of the schools which provides the clinical experiences for students. The teaching staff of the Mark's Meadow School are also staff of the University teacher preparation program based in that school.

The Alternative Schools Program (TASP) places interns in alternative schools throughout the country. An ever-increasing number of alternative public schools are anxious to work with interns who have had special training. Omnibus, Cooperative Education, and Horizons are also examples of programs that look for specific types of schools.

The sites in the Off-Campus Program are chosen from many which request interns, because of some distinguishing factor that offers unusual learning opportunities for interns. There is also an attempt to provide for the possibility of cross-cultural experiences as well as expert supervision in the schools chosen. Sites have been located in California, Florida, New Mexico, Colorado, West Germany, England and Canada.

At this time, the alternative programs have access to and requests from many more schools than we can include in our teacher preparation. In this rather enviable situation, individual program directors make attempts to create relationships with schools which want to take an active role in the preparation of teachers.

With students all over this country and the world, how do we manage supervision? Each program is responsible for the supervision of its interns. Programs have been encouraged to explore variations of, alternatives to,

the old model of the once or twice monthly observation. In Explorations! where students are liable to be anywhere in the world, they are responsible for setting up their own supervision. The Off-Campus Program relies on peer supervision, observations by faculty who have worked with the student in his pre-practicum, and direct supervision by the host school. In the Integrated Day Program, the University supervisor has been replaced by an SDC resource person who is a resource for help in the implementation of new techniques by both the in-service and pre-service teacher.

Evaluations of programs, what our guidelines call a reflective quality, has been a persistent concern of the School, and of many of the staffs responsible for the programs. With so many alternatives all operating under the same "roof", we are in an unusually good position to explore design and evaluation issues. No attempt will be made here to discuss these efforts. There are a number of studies completed, underway, and contemplated concerning formative and summative questions as to the fruitfulness of the various alternatives, given the ground rules that the interrelationships among pupils, teachers, schools, and cultures compels a pluralistic approach to teacher education.

TPPC PROGRAMS FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 1973-74

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION: This is a program specifically designed for students majoring in Agriculture who are interested in becoming vocational agriculture teachers.

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS--The following four programs work in cooperation with the National Alternative Schools Program of the School of Education.

ALE-S (Alternative Learning Environments-Secondary): This is a new program which involves teaching in alternative schools on the secondary level in the Greater Boston area. It is a one semester program offering student teaching as well as working with students in non-academic settings. As part of the 15 credit program, a methods course and other learning experiences are offered.

11+ PROJECT: Juniors and seniors will have the opportunity to complete secondary school teaching certification requirements while working with an experimental curriculum based on the assumption that puberty is as much a psychological as a physical upheaval for the young. Student teaching is done at the junior high level.

TASP (The Alternative Schools Program): This program is for prospective elementary or secondary school teachers and includes an optional Outward Bound experience or an agreed-upon alternative such as work-camp experience. There is a semester-long internship in an alternative classroom situation. Students will be members of an 8-10 person inquiry and support group in which decisions concerning learning experiences will be made cooperatively with instructors.

OMNIBUS: Juniors and seniors in this program risk an academic year of living and learning in an alternative school on Cape Cod where high truancy rates and turned-off kids replicate some of the conditions of the urban ghetto schools. Students use a wide variety of community resources in their preparation for secondary (primarily) or elementary teaching.

AMHERST ELEMENTARY: This program is for prospective elementary teachers and offers a wide range of practical alternatives for working in elementary schools. There are various entry and exit points depending on the individual needs of the student. Observation and student teaching are done in Wildwood, Pelham and East Street elementary schools.

BILINGUAL/BICULTURAL: This is an intensive two-year program designed for those students committed to bilingual/bicultural education. It features work in the community and the classroom prior to elementary certification.

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION: This program is for secondary school teacher candidates interested in the growing field of cooperative education; that is, working with high school students who spend half their school time in classroom learning and half in work-learning experiences in hospitals, business offices, museums and other community services.

EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICE (ECS): Master's candidates spend one year immersed in an off-campus site community. They work and learn in many kinds of institutions in addition to schools - federal offices, community agencies, prisons, mental health work. Diverse student population and the community itself represent the heart of the curriculum.

EXPLORATIONS!: Do you have the self-direction to design your own curriculum, learning environment and teaching experiences? Explorations! is a wholly contained one year program leading to either elementary or secondary certification for those students who want to be totally responsible for making their own choices.

FITCHBURG EXCHANGE: This is a two year program open to a limited number of sophomores and juniors. One year is spent in exchange at the Fitchburg State campus where training will be given in methods and student teaching in special education.

FUTURE STUDIES: This is a two to three semester program for sophomores and juniors interested in elementary or secondary teacher certification. The thrust of the program is to explore possible alternative futures for society as well as to develop necessary teaching and learning skills.

HORIZONS: This program is specifically directed toward sophomores and juniors who wish to teach secondary school in interdisciplinary studies or who wish to prepare themselves to teach traditional subjects with greater breadth and understanding. The program works primarily with BDIC (Bachelor's Degree with Individual Concentration) students.

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION: This is a three semester program for prospective elementary or secondary school teachers who are in their sophomore or junior year. Courses explore other cultures in depth, ways to internationalize education in the U.S. as well as techniques to transplant other cultures into your classroom.

MEDIA SPECIALISTS FOR THE DEAF: This is a three year program beginning in the junior year and concluding with a Master's degree. The ultimate goal of the program is to provide professional personnel who can help deaf students to achieve at the same rate and to the same degree as hearing children through special media services. Students learn to make movies, slides, audiotapes, transparencies and other audio-visual materials through classwork and the many practicum experiences.

METEP (Integrated Day): This is an undergraduate, two semester program in elementary education. It provides those competencies necessary to function effectively in integrated day classrooms or in any educational setting where active learning is emphasized. It is combined with a Master's degree and an inservice program.

OFF-CAMPUS: This program leads to elementary or secondary certification with student teaching sites away from Massachusetts in a variety of locations including California, Colorado, England, Europe, Florida as well as many other places. Students work with educational and teaching innovations such as differentiated staffing, flexible scheduling, integrated day and open classroom.

READING SPECIALISTS: This is a two year program for sophomores and juniors through which students can qualify as reading specialists as well as elementary or secondary school teachers.

SPECIAL EDUCATION: A new program for undergraduates that begins in the fall semester 1973. Graduates of the program will be certified to teach in state schools and public day schools.

TEPAM (Teacher Education Program at Mark's Meadow): This is a five semester program combining course work with classroom teaching in Mark's Meadow Elementary School. The theory and experience of the "integrated day" model are closely related in this program to prepare elementary school teachers.

URBAN EDUCATION (CUETEP - Center for Urban Education Teacher Education Program): This program is designed to prepare elementary or secondary teachers who will have, in addition to concepts and skills relating to learning theory, the political sophistication necessary to become reform strategists. The program is flexible, having multiple entry and exit points. The student teaching semester takes place in cities such as Springfield, Boston and Albany.
The Albany Project is new for the fall of 1973 and is directed toward students of sophomore status who wish to help create new approaches to teacher preparation for inner-city schools and are willing to spend at least 50% of their time in off-campus experiences.

ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES PROGRAMS: These are secondary school teacher preparation programs in which students do their student teaching in and around Amherst. In general, there is a required methods of teaching course which is taken the semester prior to the student teaching experience.

ENGLISH EDUCATION;

SECONDARY SCHOOL MATHEMATICS;

SECONDARY SCHOOL SCIENCE;

SECONDARY SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES.

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